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# Transformation of The Culture of Islamic learning:

## Anthropological Analysis of Malay Muslim Society

Hiroko KUSHIMOTO

Fellow, Japan Society for Promotion of Science

(Sophia University)

# 1. Introduction

## **Structure of presentation**

~ The “Making” of My PhD Thesis~

1 Introduction

2 Background of the research topic

3 Field Research

4 The thesis and beyond

# 1. Introduction

## **Who am I?**

Born in 1979 in Tokyo

1998-2003 Chuo University (BA Policy studies)

2003- 2005 Tokyo Gakugei University (MA Education)

2005-2011 Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (PhD)

2012-        Postdoc Fellow of Japan Society for Promotion of Science  
(Sophia University, Tokyo)

## **Area of Study**

Anthropology of Muslim Society, Comparative Education, Area Studies

## **Experience in Malaysia**

2001-2002 1year Study Abroad Program, USM

2006-2008 Non-degree PhD Student, ATMA-UKM

2008-2011 Visiting student, KITA-UKM

# 1. Introduction

## Topic of Phd Thesis

Introduction of modern school system in the Muslim world

- Influence on Islamic learning
- not only the style but also the concepts and meanings of learning have changed

[Mitchell1988; Messick 1993; Brenner 2001; Eickelman 1992]

Question : Is it an one-way transformation that culture of Islamic learning become similar to learning in modern school?

conclusion: No

- 1. What was the transformation?
- 2. How people reacted?

# 2. Background of the research

## How did I come to the topic?

1) How Malaysian people live together with people of different cultures?

How do they learn about other cultures?

→ How Muslim learn about themselves?

2) What is the Islamic learning?

Do they have culture or concepts different from what “we” think about education?

→ Prof Naquib’s works

Unique concept of education in Islam and the problem of modernization

→ **MA Thesis** Educational Philosophy of SMN al-Attas

: **Meaning of Islamization of knowledge in the Malaysian context**

# 2. Background of the research

## Topic for PhD

- What actually happened for the Islamic learning in the modernization process?
  - How can we question the universality of the modern school education?
  - What is the relationship between the modern schooling and the local learning culture?
- should be explored in anthropological ways, based on the local experience.

# 3. Field research

## Funding

Applied for research grant for Phd Students to study abroad  
(Heiwa Nakajima Foundation)

← Some choices for Asian Studies

## Finding the research site

- To observe the modernization of Islamic learning, chose a religious school that transformed from pondok.
- Kedah : modern&traditional, accessibility , etc.
- Visited schools with UKM students

# 3 Field Research





# 3. Field Research

Spend a lot of idle time, observe how they live, what they wear and eat. –Prof. Kazuo Otsuka

## Field research:

to create hypothesis, not to prove.

to think in the other culture is to reflect what limits our imagination.

## Original Assumption

- The modernization process can be explained as negotiation among the groups, ex. Colonizer/colonized, modernist/traditionalist, nation/local, UMNO/PAS etc...
- The more important thing is the power of modern schooling that dominates the mind of people of all the groups

# 3. Field Research

## New Question

The transformation of idea reminded me of Ilich's criticism of schooling in "Deschooling Society"

Most of the people cannot imagine "education" without system like modern schools... "colonization"

1) How the process began?

→ Archival Research (Arkib negara, *Pengasuh* etc)

2) Are there any people aware of the "colonization" process?

Are there any practice to re-direct the "schooling"?

(besides Prof Naquib)

→ Research in Kuala Lumpur

Focus on people practice "traditional" learning

# 3. Field Research

## Fieldwork in Kuala Lumpur

- Class of Pendidikan Islam in Sekolah Menengah  
Islamic learning interpreted by the modern nation state
- Examples of reservation/renovation of “traditional” learning
- Criticizm against modern Islamic learning
  - Kitab Learning in Masjid, Personal residence
  - Pondok (Yayasan al-Jenderami)
  - Former Darul Arqam members
  - Madrasah of Jamaah Tabligh

→ they contrasts their practices to Islamic education in modern schools and legitimize their practice by referring to elements of pondok, especially

→ important implication for the way we look at the modernization.



# 4 Writing thesis

How can I describe the process of transformation and the reaction in one thesis?

## Thesis statement (1)

Islamic learning has transformed transformation, not only at the level of its form but in its concepts and meanings.

What previous studies has discussed?

- Most of the studies about “Islamic education” simply described
- Some Historical and Anthropology focused on transformation of basic ideas

[Mitchell1988; Messick 1993; Brenner 2001; Eickelman 1992]

→ but all only explains the process to be similar to modern schooling

# 4. Writing Thesis

Question : Is it an one-way transformation that culture of Islamic learning become similar to learning in modern school?

conclusion: No

## **Thesis Statement (2)**

The transformation of Islamic learning is not only toward assimilation with the modern schooling. There are minor but meaningful movements to re-direct the transformation.

→ Examples of reservation and renovation of “traditional” learning.

# 4. Writing Thesis

## How to describe the transformation?

Some challenges...

- 1) How to avoid to be based on the “common sense” of modern school education?
- 2) How to discuss the “meaning” without normative discussion?

- ☆ Look at the elements, not the institution
- ☆ “culture of learning Islam” as the key concept
  - = “web of meaning” consists of many elements related to learning Islam ( hint form [Geertz 1973])
  - change of the elements → transform the meaning

# Transformation of the elements and meaning of Islamic learning

category	Elements of Traditional learning	Elements of Modern religious school
Space	No separation of space for learning, living and worship	Separated classroom only for learning
Teacher	Charismatic, spiritual excellency, Independent from outside authority	Bureaucratic, dependent in qualification, teaching and income
Learner	Diverse in age, origin and level Independent seeker	Limited and divided by age, level and nationality, dependent student
Community	Spiritual bond under a leader, identity as model society → learning through life	Loosen spiritual bond Identity as model society but limited learning through life
learning	Kitab learning – read texts cover to cover → transmission of authority	Learning based on the examination → pick up points

→ When the elements of modern schooling replace the traditional elements, the meaning of learning changes little by little.

# 4. Writing Thesis

## Writing Chapters

### Part 1: Beginning of Transformation

#### Chapter1 Elements of Traditional culture and the meaning of Islamic learning

description of the elements of *pondok* as “ideal type” (not as historical fact) of the traditional culture of Islamic learning as the starting point of the transformation.

#### Chapter2 Introduction of Modern School Education and Transformation of the Concept of Islamic Learning : Analysis of articles in Journal *Pengasuh*

The Islamic leaders in early 20<sup>th</sup> century adopted the modern education system for Islamic learning based on modern concepts of learning – it is for children, focus on language, for future job



# 4. Writing Thesis

Chapter 3 Mainstreaming of Study at al-Azhar and the modernization of religious schools

the modernization of al-Azhar university affected on the promotion of such positive attitudes for the employment of the element of modern schooling to the Islamic learning.

Part 2 Islamic resurgence after 1970's and the transformation of Culture of Islamic learning

Chapter 4 New culture of Islamic learning in the Dakwah movements

discussed the background of the new leaders of *dakwah* movement and the new forms of Islamic learning produced by those leaders with the case of the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM).

# 4. Writing Thesis

## Chapter5 The Islamization policy and creation of National Islami Education

analyzed a subject “Islamic education” taught in the national schools and found that the meaning of Islamic learning came to be understood in connection with the “usefulness” in individual and national success.

## Chapter6 Transformation and reservation of the Culture of Islamic learning in the Religious Secondary Schools – The traditional elements and *ulama* training

→ The transformation after 1970’s resulted in the transformation of Islamic learning in accordance with the modern education system despite the aim of the leaders were to change the modern education system to be Islamic.

# 4. Writing Thesis

## Part 3 Critical reflection of the Transformation

**Focus on those who feel uncomfortable or problematic about the modernized Islamic learning**

Chapter 7 Culture of Islamic learning in Contemporary Kuala Lumpur: Reservation and renovation

introduced four cases of Islamic learning that insist the “traditional” element in contemporary Kuala Lumpur that is trying to keep or revive the traditional elements.

Chapter 8 Choosing not to Participate the Modern school system: A case of Non-Formal Madrasah

a case of the non-formal religious school that is not restricted by the examination system.

# 4. Writing Thesis

## Chapter 9 Recognition (kesedaran) and Feeling (perasaan) – What cannot be found in the formal Islamic education

case of “motivation seminar” to find out the elements that people feel lack in the Islamic education in the school system. What such people are seeking for has similarity with the elements of traditional learning.

# Conclusion

**1) The culture of learning dramatically transformed with the new elements.**

① Mainstream: traditional → similar to learning in modern schools

⇔ ② **Minor but important reaction seeking for alternative**

← **The case studies**

2) Previous studies tend to miss ② because of both the Muslim and researchers take for granted ideas of modern school education

→ implication of the case study to review the presupposition